

## REMARKS

Reconsideration and allowance of the subject application are respectfully solicited.

Claims 1 through 19 are pending, with Claims 1, 5, 7, 12, 16, and 17 being independent. Claims 9 and 14 were objected to and indicated as being allowable if rewritten in independent form, and Applicant has respectfully maintained these claims in dependent form as Applicant earnestly believes that the claims from which they depend will be found allowable. Claims 1, 3 through 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 12, and 14 through 18 have been amended.

Claims 1 through 8, 10 through 13, and 15 through 19 were variously rejected under 35 U.S.C. §§ 102 and 103 over U.S. Patent Nos. 5,758,210 (Hamada, et al.), 5,905,919 (Ide), and 5,361,095 (Toshinobu, et al.). All rejections are respectfully traversed.

Claim 1 recites, inter alia, a reading processing circuit for applying signal reading processing at least to other cell units in the sensor block but not included in the first set in the sensor block when the determination result obtained by the characteristic determination circuit is a predetermined result, and for disabling signal reading processing at least for the other cell units when the determination result obtained by the characteristic determination circuit is another predetermined result, which is different from the predetermined result, wherein the sensor block corresponds to a single focus detection area.

Claim 5 recites, inter alia, a reading control circuit for executing, during the reading operation, a first reading processing operation for reading the characteristic signal of the image signal in a sensor block to which the reading operation is applied, and for selectively executing a second reading processing operation for reading the image signal from the sensor block whose characteristic signal was subject to the first reading processing operation

after the first reading processing operation, wherein the sensor block corresponds to a single focus or distance detection area, in combination with a determination circuit for evaluating the characteristic signal read in the first reading processing operation and for determining whether or not the second reading processing is to be executed.

Claim 7 recites, inter alia, a reading control circuit for comparing the level of the characteristic signal read by the first signal reading circuit for a focus or distance detection area with a determination level determined in advance, for controlling the second signal reading circuit to read the image signal in that same focus or distance detection area in response to the level of the characteristic signal having a first relationship with the determination level, and for disabling reading of the image signal by the second signal reading circuit in that same focus or distance detection area in response to the level of the characteristic signal having a second relationship with the determination level different from the first relationship, wherein the plurality of image-signal accumulation sensor blocks respectively correspond to a plurality of focus or distance detection areas.

Claim 12 recites, inter alia, a reading control circuit for reading the difference output for a focus or distance detection area from the difference output section through the signal reading section, for reading the image signal output from the image-signal output section through the signal reading section in that same focus or distance detection area in response to the difference being greater than a predetermined value, and for disabling reading of the image signal in that same focus or distance detection area in response to the difference being smaller than the predetermined value, wherein the plurality of image-signal accumulation sensor blocks respectively correspond to a plurality of focus or distance detection areas.

Claim 16 recites, inter alia, a reading control circuit for reading the maximum value and the minimum value of the image signal for a focus or distance detection area through the signal reading section, for calculating the difference therebetween, for reading the image signal through the signal reading section in that same focus or distance detection area in response to the difference being greater than a predetermined value, and for disabling reading of the image signal in that same focus or distance detection area in response to the difference being smaller than the predetermined value, wherein the plurality of image-signal accumulation sensor blocks respectively correspond to a plurality of focus or distance detection areas.

Claim 17 recites, inter alia, a reading processing circuit for applying signal reading processing at least to the other cell units in the sensor block but not included in the first set of cell units in the sensor block in response to the determination result obtained by the characteristic determination circuit being a predetermined result, and for disabling signal reading processing at least for the other cell units in response to the determination result obtained by the characteristic determination circuit being another predetermined result, which is different from the predetermined result, wherein the sensor block corresponds to a single focus detection area.

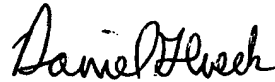
However, Applicant respectfully submits that none of Hamada, et al., Ide, and Toshinobu, et al., even in combination, assuming, arguendo, that such could be combined, discloses or suggests at least the above-discussed combinations of claimed features as recited, inter alia, in Claims 1, 5, 7, 12, 16, and 17. It is further respectfully submitted that there has been no showing of any indication of motivation in the cited documents that would lead one having ordinary skill in the art to arrive at the above-discussed claimed features.

The dependent claims are also submitted to be patentable because they set forth additional aspects of the present invention and are dependent from independent claims discussed above. Therefore, separate and individual consideration of each dependent claim is respectfully requested.

Applicant submits that this application is in condition for allowance, and a Notice of Allowance is respectfully requested.

Applicant's undersigned attorney may be reached in our Washington, D.C. office by telephone at (202) 530-1010. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our address listed below.

Respectfully submitted,



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